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CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

Thom so Ohia an Ina hanouib, agur ríodcain am an dealam deagcoil do na daoimb.

Luke ii. 14.

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CONTENTS	١.
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Polycarp					Page.	
		••	••	••	••	13
Private Judgm	ent	••	••	••	••	14
The Unanimity	of Spain	••	••	••		15
Reply of the Bi	shop of Oss	ory to the	Memoriali	sts at Kilke	enny	17
A Day in the	Dungeons	of the Ing	uisition at	Rome-B	y Rev.	
Alexander	R. C. Dalla	as	••	••	••	18
The Earl of Ca	rlisle and th	he Most	Rev. Dr.	Cullen—Re	ligious	
animosity a	ind penal la	ws	••	••	••	19
Candid Roman	Cathol c Ci	iticism on	the CATH	OLIC LAYM	AM	20
COBRESPONDE	NCB:					
	remacy of	St. Peter-	By Willian	n Geraghty	. M.D.	20
	Catechism in		-			25

POLYCARP.

In the olden time, when the usages of chivalry flourished, and kings and nobles were ready to hazard their lives in mutual combat in the tilt-yard or tournament, upon any pretext however trivial, an incident is said to have taken pretext however trivial, an incident is said to have taken place at the English Court, which is strikingly characteristic of the manners and customs that prevailed among our ancestors towards the close of the fourteenth century. Two nobles, Sir William Dalzell and Sir Piers Courtenay, the former a Scottish, the latter an English knight, quarrelled together upon some trifling matter; and, as was usual in those days, they agreed to settle their dispute by running six courses against each other with sharp lances. Henry IV. was then king of England, and acted as judge of the tournament. Each champion staked two hundred pounds in the hands of the land, and acted as judge of the tournament. Each champion staked two hundred pounds in the hands of the king, which sum was to be forfeired if, on entering the lists, any unequal advantage should be detected. When the combatants appeared in full armour, ready to commence the encounter, the Scottish knight demanded that Sir Piers Courtenay should consent to have one of his eyes put out, he himself having lost an eye in the battle of Otterbourne. Sir Piers very naturally demurred to this plan of equalization of eyesight, which would cost him so dear; whereupon the Scot demanded the forfeit, which, after much altercation, King Henry ordered to be paid to him. The justice of the decision may reasonably be doubted, but it was, doubtless, in accordance with the spirit and humour of that time.

Now, it has often seemed to us that, in our controversy with the Church of Rome, the Roman Carholic advocates adopt a course which somewhat resembles that of the

with the Church of Rome, the Roman Carholic advocates adopt a course which somewhat resembles that of the Scottish knight just described. We bring forward to this encounter all the resources, both of reason and information, which are at our command. Our object is truth, and truth alone; and, in pursuit of it, we think it both justifiable and necessary to use all the faculties with which mankind have been endowed by the Creator for this very purpose. We take nothing upon trust; we investigate the truth of historical statements; we inquire into the probability of the facts therein recorded; we reject without scruple those accounts which amear fabureject without scruple those accounts which appear fabu-lous, or which are devoid of fair claims to credibility; in short, to the best of our ability, we keep both our eyes open at each step in our progress, and at every stage in the controversy; and we will not consent to put out one

of them.

Very different, however, are the principles upon which our adversaries of the Church of Rome seem disposed to act, if we may judge by the statements which are occasionally put forward on their behalf. Our readers, doubtless, remember how frequently, in the pages of this journal, we have quoted at length the legends and miraculous stories which are commonly circulated among devout Roman Catholics, and how often we have asked, and asked in vain, for any proof of their historical truth. and asked in vain, for any proof of their historical truth. Many Roman Catholic writers seem to act on the principle, that, provided a story be calculated to exalt the Church or to enforce some religious duty, it may be freely adopted, and even incorporated into the ritual of divine worship, without any regard to its being true or not. They have pored so long over medieval legends, that their power of discerning truth or falsehood has become impaired. If they are asked to defend some story in the Breviary, or some miraculous event in the lives of the saints, they refuse to accept the challenge. They

deliberately shut their own eyes to the historic incredibility of these events; and they then think that we are little better than obstinate unbelievers, if we decline to follow their example.

It is, we trust, needless for us to assert, that in our endeavours to expose the fabulous character of the It is, we trust, needless for us to assert, that in our endeavours to expose the fabulous character of the Roman martyrologies, or to point out their want of historic credibility, we have no intention to throw discredit upon the lives of any persons, be they men or women, who have adorned the Christian faith by their life and conduct, or who may have suffered death for the cause of the Gospel. We consider such persons to be the brightest ornaments of the age in which they lived; and we ascribe a value to the record of their sufferings far transcending that which belongs to the noblest earthly exploits. In the history of the trials of the faithful servants of God in every age, in their patient endurance of suffering, in their meekness under unmerited reproaches, in their fortitude even unto death, we recognize one of the clearest proofs of the divine origin of our holy faith. We see in them how God is able to sustain those that are truly His. under trials which would quell the courage and daunt the spirit of the votaries of any false religion. But it is precisely because we believe that such records, if true, are of inestimable value that we are steadfastly opposed to all those writers who overlook the distinction between truth and falsehood, and who, whether from carelessness or design, seek to mix up whether from carelessness or design, seek to mix up baseless fables with historic facts. Such persons only undermine the faith which it is their professed object to confirm. It is no light or trifling matter thus to adulterate the pure gold of the sanctuary with the alloy of human inventions.

It will be in the recollection of our readers that we have on various occasions stated our reasons for disbe-lieving many of the marvellous tales respecting supposed saints and martyrs, which are in common circulation among devout Roman Catholics at the present day. dwelt particularly, in several numbers of this journal, on the stories told in the Roman Breviary concerning the lives and miracles of the saints who are there commemo-rated. We brought forward some of the wonderful legends which all Roman Catholic priests are obliged to read for more than one hour of each day, under pain of mortal sin; and we asked our readers, in all earnestness, did they believe these stories to be true, or did they think that the priests who daily study them themselves believe in the truth of the legends which their Church compels them to read? Many of these stories it would be now tedious to repeat; and our readers, if they have leisure, may refer to them in our former volumes. We quoted, word for word, the passage in which it is stated that "St. Denis took up his head after it was cut off, and carried it for two thousand paces." We adduced the statement which describes the "most renowned miracle of St. Raymund de Pennsfort, who, being about his cloak upon the island of Majorca to Barcelona, spread his cloak upon the sea, and performed the voyage, of one hundred and sixty miles, in six hours, finishing by entering his monastery through the closed doors." We brought forward the still more surprising tale respecting St. Stanislaus of Cracow, of whom it is recorded, that "when he was barbarously murdered by the king, and his body cut into four pieces and scattered about the fields, the eagles would not allow the wild beasts to touch them; and that, finally, the canons of Cracow, led by a heavenly light, collected the scattered limbs and fitted them together, whereupon the limbs again united so closely that not a trace of the wounds was visible!"

*Vide CATHOLIC LAYMAN, December, 1854, p. 144; January, 1855, p. 13; October, 1855, p. 111.

b De quo illud memoriæ proditum est, abscissum suum caput sustulisse, et progressum ad duo millia passuum in manibus gestasse.

Brev. Rom. Pars Autumnalis. Oct. 9, lectio vi.

Multa patravit minacula, inter que illud clarissimum, quod ex insula Baleari majori Barcinonam reversurus, stiato super aquas pallio centum sexaginta mililaria sex horis confecerit, et suum cenobium januis clausis fuerit ingressus.—Brev. Rom. Pars Hiemalis Jan. 23.

Jan. 23.

d Postremo impius rex sacerdotem Dei, hostlam immaculatam ad altare offerentem sua manu obiruneat; corpus membratim concisum, et per agros prejectum, aquim a feris mirabiliter defendunt Mox canonica (tracorienes sparsa ment bra nocturni de cælo apleadoris idélico colligunt, et suis locis apte disportunt; que subita ita interse copulata ruunt, ut nulla vulnerum vestigla extarent.—Brev. Rom. Para Æstiva. Maii 7.

Now, we do not deny the possibility of these legends being true. We believe, with Holy Scripture, that "with God all things are possible" (Matt. xix. 26); and if the above, or any similar histories, were supported by proper historic, unimpeachable evidence, they would, proper historic, unimpeachable evidence, they would, doubtless, be entitled to our assent. But the most ardent advocate of the Church of Rome will scarcely assert this to be the case. We believe, on the contrary, that the light in which these stories are regarded by most Roman Cathometer in the case of the case of private judgment to call in question statements which their Church has sanctioned. They consider these legends to have a captain moral tonderous and this carried writer and this carried writer and the has sanctioned. They consider these legends to have a beneficial moral tendency; and this consideration enables them to dispense with the inquiry whether the stories are true or the reverse. In short, as we said before, we believe that they slut their eyes to the inherent improbability of much that their Church teaches them; nay, sometimes, they avowedly act on the principle, that the more difficult of belief a statement may be, the greater is the merit in believing.

We, however, are under no such obligation. We believe that the laws of truth are paramount to every other consideration; and we consider that this craving for strange and miraculous legends, which is such a peculiar feature in the Roman Catholic system, both in ancient and modern times, is itself a proof of an unsound and unhealthy moral state. We know from holy Scripture that the working state. We know from holy Scripture that the working even of genuine miracles is no proof that the person who works them is a true servant of God. Our blessed Saviour has solemnly told us, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them: I never harw you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. vii. 22.) How much more must this uncertainty exist, when the supposed miracles, if judged by the ordinary laws of evidence, appear to be baseless and absurd fictions? baseless and absurd fictions?

We propose, on the present occasion, to lay before our readers a few facts respecting the life of a Christian bishop who suffered martyrdom about the middle of the second century. We do so, because we believe that the most effectual antidote against a diseased craving for miraculous stories, like those of the Roman Breviary, is to be found in the study of the true narratives of the lives of pious men, whose virtues have been recorded for our improvement. The history of Polycarp does not contain a single miracle; and we, therefore, cannot undertake to narrate, for the amusement of our readers, how he carried his head in his hand, or swam the sea in his cloak, or had the four quarters of his body miraculously joined together after his death. We willingly leave such tales to the Roman Breviary; and we content ourselves with such facts as may be gathered from the pages of the ecclesiastical historian Eusebius. The only consolation we can offer is, that our readers need not shut their eyes, as they glance over the following

We have no certain information as to the date of Polycarp's birth; however, as it is agreed by all writers that he was of a very advanced age at the time of his martyrdom, which took place about the year A.D. 166, we cannot be far wrong in placing his birth about the close of Nero's reign; that is, about thirty years after our Lord's ascension. Irenæus, who was the immediate disciple of Polycarp, has left us in a short compass a most interesting summary of the chief events of his life. "Polycarp," saith he, "was not only taught by the Apostles, and conversant with many of those who saw our Lord in the flesh, but he was established by the Apostles as bishop of the Church of Smyrna in Asia. I saw him myself in early youth; and he always taught those things which he had We have no certain information as to the date of Poly-

There is, indeed, one circumstance which looks like a miracle, recorded in his life by Plonius, which may be found extracted out of a Greek manuscript, in the great work of the Bollandists, under the date of January 26, p. 696. The story is to this effect, that when a certain noble matron, whose name was Callisto, who had been very kind te Polycarp, had exhausted all her granaries in relieving the poor, at a time of great public distress, the granaries were suddenly filled again, through Polycarp's prayers. We will only observe that Plonius lived at least more than a century after the death of Polycarp; and that he does not tell us from what source the story was derived. Hence, although the period in que stion (nearly the close of the first century was cere in which miraculous gifts abounded in the Church, yet we must a that that the story rests on insufficient evidence.

learned from the Apostles, which, also, he handed down to the Church. He persevered steadily to the end, and in the extremity of old age he departed this life, having suffered margedom in the most glorious and complexous manner."

The statement here given by Irenæus that Polycarp was made Bishop of Smyrna by the Apostles is repeated from him by Eusebius and other writers; and Tertullian adds the additional fact, that St. John was the Apostle by whom the appointment was made. This fact is particularly deserving of notice, if the conclusion drawn from it by Archbishop Ussher be trueb—namely, that Polycarp was the angel, or Bishop of the Church at Smyrna, to whom St. John was commanded to address the message recorded in the second chapter of the Revelation. Indeed, if we bear in mind that this book was written not long before the Apostle's death, and that Polycarp, as we have seen, was appointed Bishop of the Church at Smyrna by St. John, and certainly survived him for many years, it seems by no means improbable that Polycarp was actually Bishop of the Church at Smyrna when the Revelation was composed; and if so, he was containly the angel to whom St. John was commissioned to address these words, "And unto the angel of the Church in Smyrna write: These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is afree, I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty; but thou art rich.

Tear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: le then faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Rev. ii. 8, seq.). If this prediction was really addressed to Polycarp, we shall presently see that it was minutely and strikingly fulfilled.

Not many years after St. John's death, when the per-ecution of Trajan against the Christians began to be enforced, Ignatius the Bishop of Antioch was con-demned by the Emperor, and sentenced to be brought to Rome, in order to be executed. In his voyage thither he touched at Smyrna, to salute and converse with Polycarp; and there, as we have reason to believe, these good and faithful men mutually comforted and sneouraged each other, under the trials to which they were severally exposed. From Smyrna Ignatius and his company sailed to Troas, from which place he sent back an Epistle to the Church of Smyrne, wherein he deavours to warn them against some of the errors of the times which had crept in amongst them; and besides this he wrote particularly to Polycarp, commending the Church of Antioch to his care. From this date (A.D. 107) we hear nothing of Polycarp for many years, until an unhappy dissension which brose in the Church brought him again prominently forward.

The difference in question arose about the exact di on which the festival of Easter should be observed, and about the manner of observing the Easter fast. Upon this point the Eastern and Western Churches were divided in spinion; and each justified its practice by apostolic tradition. In order to appears this dissenting the contraction of the contraction of the contraction. sion if possible, Polycarp, about A.D. 158, under-took a journey to Rome. Aniscous was then Bishop of that see, and the account which Irensus (who, we have seen, was a disciple of Polycarp) gives of the result of their interview is extremely remarkable. The passage is quoted as follows by the historian Eusebius:

** The difference in our fasting establishes the unanimity of our faith.... When Polycarp of blessed memory came to Rome in the time of Anicetus, and there had been a small controversy between them concerning some other things, they straightway mutually embraced each other, having no desire to dispute much with one another about this matter. For neither could Anicesus persuade Polycarp not to observe it [the Easter fast] because he had always kept it with John the disciple of our Lord, and the other Apostles with whom he had been conversant; nor did Polycarp induce Anicetus not to observe it, who said, that he ought to retain the usages of the presby ters that were his predecessors. Which things being so, they received the communion together. And Anicetus permitted Polycarp (from an honourable respect for him) to consecrate the Sacrament in his ewn Church; and they parted peaceably one from another; both those who observed it [the fast] and those who observed it not retaining the peace and communion of the whole Church,"

The entire of this narrative is singularly instructive.

It not only sets forth, in a very striking light, the mingled firmness and moderation of Polycarp, but it likewise enables us to form a just estimate of the true sition occupied by the Bishop of Rome in those days. position occupied by the Bishop of Rome in those days. We hear nothing of the infallibility of the Pope, as suc-sessor of St. Peter; nothing of his supreme authority to rule and govern the universal Church.

Anicetus meet on terms of absolute equality; they mufually endeavour each to after the other's opinion; and when neither could succeed, they agree to differ, and, in the words of the historian: "they parted peaceably one from another." It would have been well for the peace and harmony of the Christian world if the popes had always then industrial. an influenced by the same spirit of moderation and forbearance.

The days of the good bishop Polycarp were now, hower, drawing to a close. In the year 166, the persecution of the Christians under Marcus Aurelius Antoninus commenced, and is a little while it raged with the eatest violence throughout Asia Minor. The letter is still extract in which the sorrowing Church of Smyrna relates to the Christian community at Philomelium the manner of Polycarp's death. The antiquity of this letter, no less than the touching character of the scene which it describes, combine to render it one of the most remarkable documents in the whole range of ecclesiastical history. We must content oursel line of the events which it details. We must content ourselves with a brief out-

Polycarp, during the persecution at Smyrna, had been urged by his friends to retire to a neighbouring village, where he passed the greater part of his time in prayer Here three days before his apprehension, he remarkable dream, which his anticipation of his fate led him to interpret as an intimation that he should be burnt alive, a foreboding but too exactly verified by the event. After many Christians in Smyrna had sealed their testimony with their blood, the cry rose among the infuriated populace, "Away with the Atheists! let Poly-earp be apprehended." His place of concealment was betrayed by two slaves, who were forced by torture to confess it. When the officers arrived, Polycarp calmiv said, "The will of the Lord be done; and after spending two bours in prayer, he was conducted to the city. He was met by Herod, the chief magistrate, and his father Nicetes, who took him into their own carriage, and vainly endeavoured to persuade him to submit to the two tests usually proposal to the Christians, namely, to acknowledge the emperor as Lord, and to offer sacri fice. On his determined refusal he was hastly thrust out of the chariot, and conducted to the theatre, the beuches of which, rising one above another, crowded with frautic spectators.

Tue proconcul, Stratius Quadratus, appeared touched with pity for the wenerable bishop, and urged him to deny the Christian faith. "Regard." saith he, to deny the Christian faith. "Regard," saith "thy great are; swear by the genius of Caswear, and I will release thee; biaspheme Christ." proposal was rejected with indignant scora. "highly and six year," said Polycara, "have I served Christ, " Kighty and He has never done me an injury; how can I blas-phene my King and my Saviour?" The proconsul The proconsul threatened to expose him to the wild beasts. He re-plied again, "Tis well for me to be speedily released from this life of misery." The proconsul threate ed to burn him aive. He replied once more, "I fear not the fire that burns for a moment; thou knowest not that which burns for ever and ever." His countenance was full of peace and joy, even when the herald advanced into the midst of the assemblage, and thrice proclaimed, Polycarp has professed himself a Christian.

A general cry arose among the populace, that the bishop should be burned alive. The Jews were as vindic ively active as the heathen in collecting the fuel of the baths and other combustibles, to raise up a hasty, yet capacious, funeral pile. The venerable martyr was speedily bound to the stake; and then offered up the following

simple and touching prayer:

"O Lord God Almighty, the Father of Thy wellbeloved and ever blessed son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of Thee; the God of angels, powers, and of every creature, and of the whole race of the right cous who live before Thee; I bless Thee that thou hast graciously thought me worthy of this day and this hour, that I may receive a portion in the number of Thy martyrs, and drink of Christ's cup, for the resurrection to eternal life both of body and soul, in the incorruptibleness of the Holy Spirit; among whom may I be admitted this day, as a pure and acceptable sacrifice, as Thou, O true and faithful God, has prepared and foreshown and accomplished. Wherefore I praise thee for all Thy mercies, I bless thee, I glorify thee, with the sternal and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, to whom with Thee and the Holy Spirit be glory now and ever."

The fire was kindled by the executioners; but the

flames arose around the pious martyr, curving like an arch, or like a sail swelling with the wind, leaving his body unharmed. A spearman was sent in to dispatch the sufferer: his side was pierced, and blood enough

*Our readers, we doubt not, will observe that throughout the entire of this prayer, one of the most ancient and valuable memorials of the worship of the primitive Church, there is not the slight at allusion to the Virgim Mary, and no address or petition to sannte or angula. We sak our Roman Carholio friends to attend particularly to this circumstance. Gould Polycarp have omitted all mention of the Virgim Mary if he had believed (as the present Pope Pine IX. wrote in his Encyclical Letter of Feb. 2, 1849) that 'God hash placed the plantinne of all good in her in such a meaner, that if there is no us say hope. If there he are spiritual health, we know that it is from her that we receive it, because such is the will of Him who math selled that we should have all by the instrumentating of Mary (quis sic est veluntas qua, qui totum nos habers voidit per Mariam)?

flowed from his aged body to extinguish the flames immediately around him.

The malice of the enemies of Polycarp did not end with his death. His friends and followers were anxious to give the remains of the martyr an honourable burial, but the Jews and others advised the proconsul not to bestow his body on the Christians, lest leaving their Divine Master, they should henceforth worship Polycarp. This calumnious charge is repelled with scorn in the letter of the Church of Smyrna (from which the entire narrative is taken), in the following emphatic words: "They little consider how impossible it is that either we should forsake Christ, who died for the salvation of the whole world, or that we should ever worship any other. For we adore Him as being the Son of God; but martyrs, as the disciples and followers of our Lord, we deservedly love for their eminent kindness towards their own Prince and Master, whose companions and fellow-disciples we also by all means desire to be." Nothing can be clearer than this testimony to prove how far removed those pious and primitive Christians were from that undue and superstitious veneration of the relics martyrs and departed saints, which after ages introduced into the Church.

Some of the circumstances introduced into the foregoing narrative, as well as other incidents contained in the letter of the Church of Smyrna, may seem to verge on the supernatural; but they are no more than may be ascribed to the high-wrought imagination of the Christian spectators deepening every incident into a wonder. The whole narrative has the simple energy of wonder. The whole narrative has the simple energy of truth. The prudent, yet resolute conduct of the aged bishop—the expostulation of the governor—the brutal fury of the populace—the Jews eagerly seizing the opportunity of testifying their hatred to the Christian name: all are simply yet vividly pourtrayed. And if we are right in identifying Polycarp with the angel of the Church of Smyrna in the Apocalypse, we cannot but be struck with the exact conformity between the prophecy and the fulfilment. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; be show faithful unto death; and I will give thee a crown of life."

We conclude in the words of the ancient document

We conclude in the words of the ancient document, to which we have so often referred.

"Thus far concerning the blessed Polycarp Eleven brethren from Philadelphia suffered with him, but he alone is particularly celebrated by all. Even by Gentiles he is spoken of in every place. He was in truth, not only an illustrious teacher, but also an eminent writer, where the support of the second is true. whose martyrdom all desire to imitate, because it was regulated exactly by evangelical principles. For by patience he conquered the unjust magistrate; and thus receiving the crown of immortality, and exulting with apostles and all the righteous, he glorifies God, even the Father, and blesses our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of our souls and the Ruler of our bodies, and the Shepherd of the universal Church throughout the world !"

PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

Or all the controversies with the Church of Rome which have been discussed in our pages, the question concerning the use of private judgment is, in one sense, the most important; for if this question were decided against us, it would be no use to us to obtain a victory on all the rest. What advantage would it be to prove to the satisfaction of our readers that, according to our private judgment and theirs, there was no such place as purgatory, no such thing as transubstantiation, that we ought not to use invocation of saints, and so forth, if, after all, we had to own that neither we nor they had any right to use our private judgment at all?

It is well for us that the principle which is of such vital importance in this controversy is also the easiest to establish. We might say a good deal about the right of private judgment, and something more as to the duty of private judgment, but we think it enough now to prove the necessity of private judgment. We use our private judgment because we cannot help it. All the choice we have got is, whether we shall exercise our private judgment in one single act or in a great many; but exercise it one way or other we must. We may either apply our private judgment separately to the different questions in controversy, purgatory, transubstantiation, invocation of saints, &c., and come to our own conclusion on each; or we may apply our private judgment to the question whether the Church is infallible, and if we decide that it is, then take all the rest of our opinions on trust from the priest. But it is clear that we cannot be certain that any of these opinions are right unless our private judgment has decided the question rightly whether we ought to submit implicitly to the Church; and this is just as hard as any question in the controversy. It is just as if we had the disposal of a large sum of money. We might lay it out ourselves on the various objects which we judged fit; or we might give it away in one lump sum to somebody else; but that is all the choice we have. If the money is once in any is all the choice we have. If the money is once in our hands we cannot avoid deciding, either by one single act of our judgment or by a great many, which shall be the next hands it shall get into.

People don't like private judgment because they don't

f Irenaua, adv. Hær. lib iii., c. iii., p. 208, Oxon. 1708.

8 Hee enim mode ecclesiæ aporteices census seus defertant; sicut Smyrosseum ecclesia Polecarpum ab Jisanes contecatum refert.

Tertuil. de præstr. Hær. cap. xxxii., p. 212. Pare. 1675.

a Vide Care. Life of Polycarp, p. 113. London, 1677. Cotd.

Patr. apost., vol. ii., p. 198. Note. Amstel, 1794.

1 This is one example among several that might be readily adduced, how hable tradition is to be corrupted in the lapse of time.

If al. the Aposiles actually observed Easter upon the same day, how did it come to pass that in the short space of a contary the easter Eastern and Western Charries alopted different usages, and cash pleaded spectotic suzhority? It is plain that both could make be right.

Vide Eusebens Sect. Hist., lib. iv., cap 15.

[/] Bench. Hint. lib, v. cap. 24,